

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVITY IN MULTICULTURAL TEAMS

Team processes and conflict management styles

Aino Ranta

International Business  
Bachelor's Thesis  
Supervisor: Jacek Mironski  
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ABSTRACT OF  
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**Objectives**

The main objectives of this study were to explore multicultural teams, conflict occurring in them, the effects of conflict and effectivity throughout teamwork. Specifically, the research attempts to find the appropriate conflict management style considering cultural diversity within teams that minimizes the negative effects of conflict. The paper also examines conflict and other team processes in different stages of teamwork, provides insight for the differences between the stages, and attempts to find ways to utilize cultural differences. The main objective is to optimize effectivity of multicultural teams.

**Summary**

The research was conducted to provide more insight for multinational corporations to utilize their diverse resources. Conflict has been proven to be either constructive or destructive for teamwork processes, which especially multicultural teams may find difficult due to the additional differences in the teams. Conflict management can be very effective and teach members to embrace constructive conflict, learn from it and reinforce more coherent teamwork. The beginning stages of teamwork are especially vulnerable as common processes are not established yet. Thus, the research studies conflict and effectivity of multicultural teams throughout team building stages and different team processes.

**Conclusions**

Multicultural team were found to be more complicated compared to homogeneous teams. Additional awareness and cultural competence training is needed for the beginning stages of teamwork, as the cultural differences were only learned throughout working, which makes initial work less effective. As members know each other personally, they are motivated to work more coherently and consider others. Coherence and common team identity increased negotiations and constructive conflict, and decreased relationship conflict and ambiguous processes.

**Key words:** Multicultural teams, constructive conflict, relationship conflict, conflict management styles, team roles and processes, effectivity

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ABSTRACT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background and research problem

International business is changing with the world's social movements bringing multinationalism a current issue within organizations (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000). This thesis explores the benefits and challenges multicultural teams (MCTs) face throughout team processes. The most prevalent team process the text focuses on is conflict management, its styles and types of conflict. The purpose is to find ways to improve multicultural teamwork and its effectivity for organizations to better utilize their diverse resources.

Teamwork is a dynamic process, which has to be carefully managed even between individual team members. Cultural differences add complications, such as communicational, decision making and conflict management style preference differences which the members will have to adjust to, find common processes to work effectively and to find satisfaction in work (Ochieng & Price, 2009). Conflict, both constructive and relationship based, can be also destructive for work continuity (Ungerleider, 2008). Cultural differences have been found to impact conflict management preferences, for instance, in terms of considering it constructive and skill developing compared to offending and avoidable (Foo, 2011, Halverson, 2008, Lu & Wang, 2017, Mickan & Roger, 2000). Thus, finding processes to ensure awareness of cultural diversity and their working preferences will help multinational corporations to avoid the common downfalls with MCTs.

The topic of multicultural teams, conflict and effectivity has been previously studied. However, previous studies have focused on the management side of teamwork and less on the team members themselves. Also, in many cases cultural differences are not utilized to the best of their abilities but rather forgotten (Chang, 2010, Kirkman & Shapiro, 2005). This may cause problems due to diversity of team process preferences. Thus, this thesis explores the issues of occurring conflict, its management and overall effectivity from diverse team

members' perspective. In the end, having a pleasant and smooth teamwork experience fuels the process gains possible that will benefit the team members and the organization.

At first, this thesis studies other research of the subject and draws hypothesis for the purpose of primary research. The primary research, in turn, is in the form of questionnaires and interviews with students from the Aalto University, Mikkeli Campus in Finland. Interviews with employees from four companies that utilize MCTs were also conducted to compare experiences and empirical data from working with students to the working life within companies.

## 1.2. Research objectives

Specifically, my research objectives are to:

1. Study which are the most appropriate conflict management styles within diverse teams that will suit members of different cultural backgrounds.
2. Explore the stages of team development that conflict will occur in and how conflict differs between the stages.
3. Study how culturally diverse teams can embrace conflict mutually for enhanced communication and work output.
4. Examine how effectivity is influenced by cultural diversity and conflict throughout teamwork.

## 4.1. Research questions

1. How can conflict be managed in an optimal way for performance improvements in culturally diverse teams?
2. What type of conflict occurs in different stages of teamwork?
3. How can effectivity and utilization of MCTs be optimized concerning cultural differences and conflict?



### 3.1. Definitions of main terminology

Multicultural teams: interdependent groups working together on a common goal and purpose that have complementary skills and accountability for each other (Mickan & Roger, 2000) with more than one national culture in it.

Team processes: functions of the team, such as communication, conflict management and decision making.

Constructive conflict: conflict based on tasks, dealt with constructively.

Relationship conflict: conflict based on personal emotions and preferences, hard to deal with constructively.

Win – win conflict management style: collaborative conflict management, both parties' interests considered.

Win – lose conflict management style: compromising conflict management, one party dominates solution.

Zero-sum conflict management style: avoiding and competitive conflict management, conflict is left unsolved or one solution is forced.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.1. Multicultural teamwork

#### 4.1.1. Multicultural teams

Teams are defined as interdependent groups working together on a common goal and purpose that have complementary skills and accountability for each other (Mickan & Roger, 2000). Diversity can be defined by differences in the sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion and other cultural subgroups of team members (Johnson et al., 2006). This paper focuses on ethnicity and culture diversity in teams. Therefore, multicultural teams are ones with members of one or more cultures or nationalities that work interdependently on the same objectives (Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Tirmizi, 2008), and are more cohesive and committed by structure than groups (Tirmizi, 2008).

Working in multicultural teams has been proven to be more complex than culturally homogeneous teams (Chang, 2010, Foo, 2011, Halverson, 2008 & Morris et al., 1998). The difficulties arise, for instance, from lack of team member integration (Chang, 2010, Foo, 2011), cultural differences making relationship conflict more probable (Halverson, 2008, Mickan & Roger, 2000) and cultural barriers hindering conflict solutions (Morris et al., 1998, Stahl et al., 2010). Therefore, articles have attempted minimize these process losses and enforce process gains (Stahl et al., 2010, Zander & Butler, 2010, Watson et al., 1998).

Process gains can be dominant in cases of cautiously well-managed multicultural teams. By managing team processes and having established guidelines for work, process gains have, indeed, been significantly larger in many cases and the use of multicultural teams continues to be more common (Johnson et al., 2006, Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000, Plessis, 2011, Zander & Butler, 2010). Benefits that overpower the negative sides can be achieved with cross-cultural training, cultural responsiveness, intelligence and competence (Adair et al., 2013, Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Halverson, 2008, Johnson et al., 2006, LaFramboise et al., 1993). Motivation for working towards established team processes, in turn, can be accomplished by sharing values within a team, sharing strengths with the team, increasing team inclusiveness and achieving trust (Adair et al., 2013, Chang, 2010, Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005). These factors can lead to shared team identity which further motivates the team (Desivilya et al., 2010). Motivation is an important factor in teamwork in terms of team cohesion, productivity and the quality of work.

Popescu et al. (2014) found effective and well-functioning teams to have more cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative and emotional stability compared to homogeneous teams. Achieving this is not only profitable for the organization but creates a pleasant work environment, which further aids motivation for team members. Overall, MCTs continue to be an effective way of working as long as they are carefully managed. Companies choosing MCTs as a way of working should, therefore, be aware of the triumphs and downfalls of the process in order to get the results expected.

#### 4.1.2. Teamwork and roles

Teams have been found to perform better than individual people in tasks, such as problem solving, innovation and decision making, due to the diversity of skills, ability to detect errors and sense of common goals (Adair et al., 2013, Ochieng & Price, 2009, Watson et al., 1998). However, teamwork entails its difficulties with process losses too. For instance, team roles are an aspect in teamwork that defines processes by setting clear tasks and responsibilities to certain members, which guides work. One of the widely used models of team roles to understand team and member dynamics better is by Belbin (<http://www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles/>). The Belbin team roles (ibid) are:

Resource investigator (RI): an optimistic person who excels at developing contacts and ideas but may lose interest frequently.

Team worker (TW): a diplomatic person who brings the team together but may be indecisive and avoid conflict and its resolution.

Coordinator (CO): mature team worker with focus on the objective but may seem manipulative.

Plant (PL): a creative problem solver that may seem absent minded and forget to communicate well.

Monitor evaluator (ME): the source of logic, good strategies and discern although might lack inspiration and motivation.

Specialist: has a special skill to offer and complete, works more independently from the team.

Shaper (SH): challenges the team and keeps it moving ahead, might seem offending.

Implementer (IM): puts plans into action, is practical and reliable although inflexible.

Completer finisher (CF): best at the end of team work to perfect the finishing details to product, may worry and not delegate well.

Awareness and understanding the training of processes and roles of the teams improves the flow of work and decreases conflict according to Halverson (2008) and Plessis (2011). For example, by recognizing the plant and complete finisher of the group it is clear who will be doing the creative side and spell checks of a project. On the other hand, Adair et al. (2013) believe that if multicultural team members have a common goal, shared values, and an interest to adjust to differences when needed, it results in no need for training of members. However, this is improbable due to cultural differences that make teamwork difficult (Halverson, 2008, Morris et al., 1998).

There are also differences in beliefs on whether members of the team should be specifically chosen for roles or whether the members chosen should later be trained to work together according to different roles (Mickan & Roger, 2000, Plessis, 2011, Zander & Butler, 2010). The team role theory of Belbin does not specify either of these beliefs. It only states the importance of having balanced team roles that members are aware of through self-reflection (Smith & Yates, n.d. a). Therefore, although the processes of integrating awareness of team roles are different, the conclusion of needing established roles that the team and its members understand is consistent.

Whether teamwork is needed may be unclear to companies, because the functions of teams are complex but still more effective than individuals in some cases. Plessis (2011) has created a four-step model for using teams. Firstly, the recognition for the need of teamwork is explained. This can be the need for diverse skills, creativity, or quicker, more confident decision-making, which all are process gains of teamwork (Mickan & Roger, 2000, Stahl et al., 2010, Zander & Butler, 2010, Woehr et al., 2013). For example, some tasks need special skills from various members of an organization because of complexity. An individual acquiring these skills and then completing the task would be inefficient in this case.

Secondly, the article selects appropriate members for the team for the given task. Then, managing team processes, such as decision making, conflict management and problem solving have to be established (Mickan & Roger,

2000, Tirmizi, 2008). This stage is important in the beginning of teamwork for the functionality of the processes during work stages later. Finally, conflict management has to be maintained throughout the stages of work. Overall, teamwork is an effective way of working, when the task is comprehensive, needs the skill set of various people and the members complement the functions of the team.

Hypothesis 1: Established roles within teams decrease conflict and improve effectivity by setting clear responsibilities and tasks to certain people that improve the flow of processes.

#### 4.1.3. Cultural differences

Culture is a set of norms, values, behaviors, symbols, practices and perceptions combined together cohesively within a group of people (Moran, 2001, Stahl et al., 2010). Culture affects teamwork by making it more complicated yet effective. Whether teams are useful depends on, for example, the motivation and integration present (Adair et al., 2013, Desivilya et al., 2010) and deep-level factors of the team, such as culture that changes little over time and highly affects productivity (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2005, Woehr et al., 2013). Surface-level factors, such as age, gender and race, also affect the functionality of teams but are more manageable (Woehr et al., 2013).

Other factors related to culture determining the outcome of teamwork are cultural competence, cultural intelligence and cultural responsiveness (Adair et al., 2013, Gibson and Ross Grubb, 2005, LaFramboise et al., 1993). Cultural competence relates to how competent a person is with working among differing cultures and understanding behaviors related to them. Cultural intelligence similarly explains how well a person knows and understands cultures and behaviors. Finally, cultural responsiveness entails how well a person responds to cultural cues, such as differing ways of greeting (ibid).

A theory created by Hofstede (2001) can be used to educate team members on these cultural skills. The theory explains the aspects of culture with culture-

general and culture-specific knowledge. For instance, culture-general knowledge focuses on the awareness of cultural differences, ways of improving the effectiveness of culturally diverse environments and explains the components, value learning processes and understanding. The theory examines these in different political, social, financial, economic and technological settings. Hofstede's (2001) culture-specific knowledge explains cultures individually and their specific information, attributes and factors. The theory is useful in getting to know members within teams as members start to understand their cultural environments and how they occur. For example, members learn the details different cultures handle in their own ways, learn to anticipate it and react correctly to it. Thus, it improves the cultural competence, intelligence and responsiveness of members.

Finally, similarity attraction theory, social categorization theory and information processing theory, too, arose from cultural differences (Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Stahl et al., 2010, Woehr et al., 2013). Poorly integrated teams that do not understand each other's cultural backgrounds well, begin to work with the members of the team that are similar to one self and social categories start forming in the minds of members (ibid). Cultural diversity also affects information processing theory through team processes (ibid). The result may be members of the team showing in-group and out-group behavior, in which the team divides into subgroups that may be detrimental to integration and performance (Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005).

The emergence of the studies and theories of MCTs arise from the challenges cultural differences impose on teamwork. For example, cultural barriers may create misunderstandings that decrease the willingness of people to work in MCTs. Subgroups may also form which decreases cohesion and effectiveness. The studies attempt to minimize these downfalls (Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016, Ochieng & Price, 2009). Overall, diversity does not always lead to ineffectiveness but there is a need for the management of cultural differences.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural diversity can make teamwork more effective, if the diversities are well-managed, meaning that team members get to know the cultures within the team in the beginning to avoid miscommunication and to stay aware of the cultural cues.

#### 4.2. Types of conflict and how they occur in culturally diverse teams

##### 4.2.1. Conflict in multicultural teams

Conflict is having to confront issues in teams (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). It can result to arguments and unresolved problems or to learning from the solutions and developing creative problem-solving skills. According to Ungerleider (2008) conflict is part of the social existence of people, thus unavoidable. It arises from differences, negative emotions, competitiveness, miscommunications and scarce resources in organizations (ibid). For instance, team members with each of their own work history have different ways of proceeding with work, time perceptions and teamwork ideas. In addition, cultural backgrounds affect communication, behavior and the interpretation of the behavior of others. For example, Germans are very punctual people by their culture whereas Australians are not, which may create misunderstood feelings of disrespect and confusion, if not acknowledged in a team beforehand. Thus, managing conflict is employing behaviors that attempt to solve the differences related to emotions and tasks (Desivilya et al., 2010).

Diversity, multicultural teams and conflict have been found to be correlated (Foo, 2011, Lu & Wang, 2017, Woehr et al., 2013). Diversity in MCTs increases the differences between team members, which increases conflict (Stahl et al., 2010, Ungerleider, 2008). However, integrating teams to share values, goals and a common culture can lead to less conflict (Adair et al., 2013). Good relations also decrease the amount of conflict in teams (Foo, 2011, Lu & Wang, 2017, Tjosvold et al., 2005). Equivalent training may include having a night with team members to get to know each other personally or having a meeting of sharing the objectives and preferred working techniques of everyone and agreeing on common guidelines.

#### 4.2.2. Constructive conflict

Constructive conflict is often related to conflict about tasks and has only few personal emotions attached to it (Kim et al., 2014, Shaw et al., 2011). Conflict about tasks is related to resources, procedures, policies and the interpretation of facts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003) and by nature task conflict is “pro-social behavior” with both of the parties’ interests being considered (Desivilya et al., 2010). Therefore, constructive conflict attempts to solve issues related to tasks in a way, where parties can learn from the conflict and improve for the future.

Managing constructive conflict is important for it to remain constructive and to avoid unresolved conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Ungerleider, 2008). Constructive conflict has also been found to improve performance, effectivity and the quality of team processes (Ayoko et al, 2012, De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Lu & Wang, 2017, Plessis, 2011, Shaw et al., 2011). For instance, Desivilya et al. (2010) state that by managing constructive conflict effectively, relationship conflict, which is negative for performance, can be minimized. De Dreu and Weingart (2003) found that well-managed constructive conflict makes teams to examine decisions closer, detect more errors, be creative with tasks and change routines with working. Overall, constructive related conflict is found positive unless poorly managed. Appropriately managed constructive conflict that suits all individual member of MCTs (Chang, 2010) may even be reinforced.

Despite the positive indications, some studies have found constructive conflict to be detrimental to performance and effectivity of teams (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Stahl et al., 2010), which can be caused by highly complex tasks or temporary, short-term durations of teamwork in which integration and common goals will not be established (Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). Too much conflict in any case is not good as teamwork will get interrupted and when the skills of members are challenged by complex tasks, conflict management may not be as collaborative, rather competitive or avoiding. The



problem with short-term work derives from having no time to integrate and share values within teams.

#### 4.2.3. Relationship conflict

Unlike constructive conflict, relationship conflict is related to emotions, personal opinions and preferences, politics, values and interpersonal factors (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Lu & Wang, 2017). Relationship conflict is related to process losses, such as communication problems, information processing capabilities and poor relationships (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Lu & Wang, 2017, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). Overall, relationship conflict has been found to decrease performance, productivity and quality of relationship and work, as it is difficult to resolve constructively without leaving the parties unsatisfied (ibid). Relationship conflict has also been found to occupy attention, to the point, where attention on tasks is decreased and solving conflict constructively becomes difficult (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Shaw et al., 2011). Thus, conflict management efforts and team processes should focus on minimizing relationship conflict, establishing team identity and commitment, which all improve interrelations of teams.

Consequently, multicultural teams are more prone to relationship conflict as teams do not identify with each other as naturally, diversity increases differences in teams, differences create misunderstandings and the coherence of the team may suffer (Foo, 2011, Halverson, 2008, Lu & Wang, 2017, Mickan & Roger, 2000, Morris et al., 1998, Stahl et al., 2010, Ungerleider, 2008, Woehr et al., 2013). Therefore, being aware of arising conflict and relationships within teams (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003) is especially important for MCTs. The better members know each other, can communicate openly and interpret each other correctly, the less relationship conflict there may be due to open dialogues.

Hypothesis 3: The more relationship conflict exists in a team, the less conflict can be dealt with constructively, which decreases productivity by shifting attention from tasks to relational problems and conflict.

#### 4.2.4. Conflict management styles

As mentioned, both constructive and relationship conflict has to be managed (Mickan & Roger, 2000, Plessis, 2011, Ungerleider, 2008). This paper uses the Thomas – Kilmann conflict management style theory regarding the way that conflict should be managed (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). The theory (ibid) specifies five different conflict management style, which are:

Collaborative: assertive and cooperative, both parties' interests considered and may result to original conflict being solved well.

Compromising: balance between assertiveness and cooperativeness, both parties' interests are considered although other has to result in a compromise, which does not result in satisfaction for both as the collaborative style does.

Competing: assertive and uncooperative, own interest considered at the expense of the other person, a power-oriented model to accomplish one's own interest.

Avoiding: flexible and uncooperative, person does not pursue own or the other party's interests, avoiding of confrontation.

Accommodating: flexible and cooperative, person attempting to satisfy the objectives of the other party and will scarify self if needed.

The Thomas – Kilmann model (ibid) helps members of teams to recognize their own conflict tendencies as well as establish guidelines for conflict management style goals for the team. Collaborating has been proven to be the most efficient way of managing both constructive and relationship conflict (Ayoko et al., 2012, De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Desivilya et al., 2010, Gitlow & McNary, 2006, Lu & Wang, 2017, Shaw et al., 2011, Tjosvold et al., 2005). For example, Gitlow and McNary (2006) and Lu and Wang (2017) have found collaborative conflict management style to create win – win situations for teams, which satisfy and benefit all parties in conflict, and optimize team processes and outcomes.

Consequently, competing, avoiding and forcing management styles are perceived as negative for relationships (Chang, 2010, De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Lu & Wang, 2017, Tjosvold et al., 2005). Competing leaves one party as defeated, avoiding leaves conflict unresolved and forcing aggressively makes one party give up their agenda. Compromising, in turn, is a zero-sum game, where conflict gets solved but the solution leaves both parties dissatisfied as they have to give up a part of their agenda for the solution (Gitlow & McNary, 2006, Lu & Wang, 2017). Therefore, conflict management should focus on accomplishing a collaborative style or accommodating style to ensure team members satisfaction, good relationships and higher quality work output concerning larger conflicts (Desivilya et al., 2010, Gitlow & McNary, 2006, Lu & Wang, 2017, Tjosvold et al., 2005). Smaller conflicts may be avoided as it decreases the interruption of work and amount of overall conflict.

Multicultural teams have to account for cultural differences in their conflict management (Ungerleider, 2008, Ochieng & Price, 2009). Kim et al. (2014), Morris et al. (1998), Ochieng and Price (2009) have studied conflict management style preferences and differences between cultures, such as North American, Chinese, English and Japanese. For instance, many Asian cultures have been found to avoid conflict and communicate indirectly, which increases the difficulty of teamwork for Western people (Kim et al., 2014, Morris et al., 1998). On the other hand, Americans use a competitive conflict management style, which is perceived as rude (ibid). Results found both conflict management styles to work, as long as members of the team interpreted reactions correctly (ibid).

Cultural differences in conflict management styles should be considered with establishing common procedures and learning about the surrounding cultures (Adair et al., 2013, Kim et al., 2014, Morris et al., 1998, Ochieng & Price, 2009, Plessis, 2011, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016, Stahl et al., 2010, Woehr et al., 2013). Overall, pre-emptive, reactive, collaborative conflict management is vital for functional teamwork (Halverson, 2008, Mickan & Roger, 2000). For instance, Ungerleider (2008) states that well-managed conflict can improve communication, innovativeness, the generation of ideas and cross-cultural

dialogue. Conflict is easier to handle before-hand or while it occurs rather than solving unresolved conflict afterwards. Being reactive and proactive also minimizes the negative and personal feelings related to conflict and its solution.

Hypothesis 4: The higher the score on collaborative conflict management style, the better it fits a multicultural team with diversity, meaning that the existing differing values and opinions will get solved by considering the benefit of all parties and less conflict remains unsolved.

### 4.3. Team processes

#### 4.3.1. Stages of multicultural team development

The stages of team development have been studied by many of which this article focuses on the model created by Tuckman and Jensen (1977). Team stages are important to be aware of as team processes occur in different stages in various ways (Halverson, 2008, Morris et al., 1998, Ungerleider, 2008). The team stages of Tuckman and Jensen (1977) include:

Forming: learning about the team, finding dependence in others, includes anxiety, curiousness and confusion.

Storming: adjusting to differing views on work and relations, the conflict stage, emotional responsibility and cohesiveness start to form.

Norming: fluency of work begins, common values, norms and culture integrate.

Performing: the stage of emergence of solutions, best functioning of the team.

Adjourning: Disengagement of the team, ending of task, positivity toward work and accomplishments.

The early stages of teamwork are a central subject in many articles, because of the vitality to establish team processes for the latter stages of work (Adair et al., 2013, Chang, 2010, Lu & Wang, 2017, Morris et al., 1998, Ochieng &

Price, 2009, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). For instance, values and desired learning outcomes are shared within the team (Adair et al., 2013, Chang, 2010), relationships and commitment are developed, and cultural differences learned in the beginning (Lu & Wang, 2017, Morris et al., 1998, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). Overall, the beginning stages of teamwork are important for the dynamics, guidelines and commitment established to be able to interpret team behavior correctly in the latter stages (ibid).

The early stages of teamwork may also get overwhelming (Foo, 2011) as the forming and norming stages include familiarizing one selves with the new situation (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). In some cases, team members have not even met each other before the beginning of work. Thus, some studies have found that conflict is present in early stages in different ways than the latter stages (Foo, 2011, Halverson, 2008, Ungerleider, 2008, Watson et al., 1998). Halverson (2008) suggests that there is less conflict in the early stages of teamwork as members have a commitment and excitement for the beginning of work. On the other hand, Foo (2011) suggests that there is more conflict in the early stages, especially if the team members do not know each other from previous work assignments. Ungerleider (2008) found the most of conflict to be in the middle stages of work, after the members are familiar with each other but start learning of the differences within the team in the norming stage. Overall, conflict is correlated to overwhelming relationships and unclear guidelines whether studies find it to happen in the early or latter stages.

The latter stages of teamwork include processes that follow and maintain the earlier ones (Lu & Wang, 2017, Morris et al., 1998, Plessis, 2011, Watson et al., 1998). The relationships formed have to be maintained, cultures learnt have to be actively interpreted and conflict management enforced (ibid). As processes become routine to members of the team, team performance improves during the latter stages accordingly (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977, Watson et al., 1998). However, if common processes were not established in the beginning the latter stages may be confusing and reduce performance. Therefore, the latter stages of teamwork focus on the work itself compared to

the earlier stages, where more time and effort is spent on team process establishment.

#### 4.3.2. Other team processes

Team processes are functions of the team, such as communication, conflict management, decision making, cohesion (Mickan & Roger, 2000, Tirmizi, 2008). Common processes are vital for cohesion and commitment, and thus, all members must be aware of and understand them (Halverson, 2008, Plessis, 2011). As mentioned, multicultural teams are, in many cases, more complex compared to homogeneous work teams. Therefore, the processes and their management including conflict management are more complex too. Thus, more focus is needed concerning the diverse values and previous working habits of individual members being transformed to a coherent team (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000).

The processes in MCTs bring both gains and losses to the teamwork output (Stahl et al., 2010, Tjosvold et al., 2005, Zander & Butler, 2010, Woehr et al., 2013). Managing processes is aimed at optimizing process gains and minimizing process losses (ibid). The most common process gains of MCTs according to the literature about the subject are creativeness, problem solving skills and decision-making process (Mickan & Roger, 2000, Ochieng & Price, 2009, Tirmizi, 2008, Zander & Butler, 2010, Woehr et al., 2013). Consequently, the most common process losses of the studies are miscommunication, increased conflict and ineffectiveness (Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Mickan & Roger, 2000, Morris et al., 1998, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016, Zander & Butler, 2010, Woehr et al., 2013). Process gains and losses, as well as the management of all team processes, must be considered in all stages of teamwork, as they differ from each other by nature (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977, Ungerleider, 2008). For example, in the storming stage process management should focus on possible conflict as the differences of perceptions between members are being recognized. However, in the performing stage the members can focus on producing work output more as the processes are understood by the team.

Overall, team processes are determining factors in teamwork functionality, member satisfaction and performance (Halverson, 2008, Plessis, 2011). Multicultural teams have to focus on processes, such as integrating diverse members to be a coherent team, avoiding detrimental conflict and the management of conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Foo, 2011, Gitlow & McNary, 2006, Ochieng & Price, 2009, Plessis 2011). Ways of achieving this may be by building cross-cultural responsiveness, inclusiveness and competence by familiarizing members together of cultural backgrounds and working habits, in order for everyone to react correctly to the behavior of others.

Hypothesis 5: Teams that spend time on establishing common team processes, such as ways of communication, conflict resolution and decision-making processes, in the beginning of work are more effective than ones that do not do this.

#### 4.4. Effective multicultural teams

Effectiveness has two dimensions according to Shaw et al. (2011) and Tirmizi (2008): satisfaction and team performance. Effective teamwork is determined by multiple factors, such as individual, teamwork and process effectivity (Mickan & Roger, 2000). In other words, the individuals in teams can be effective by being knowledgeable, committed, trustworthy and flexible, teamwork effective by having a clear purpose, tasks, roles, resources and a common culture, and finally, processes effective by coordinating, communicating, managing conflict, feedback, relationships and cohesion (ibid).

Consequently, as effectiveness is a multifaceted concept, there are many ways of achieving it. For example, well-managed conflict (Ayoko et al., 2012, De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Lu & Wang, 2017), common values, culture and team integration (Adair et al., 2013, Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Ochieng & Price, 2009) and the understanding of the cultures within the team all drive the effectiveness of MCTs (Johnson et al., 2006, Kirkman & Shapiro, 2005, LaFramboise et al., 1993,

Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). The main ways of achieving effectiveness in teams focus on team processes that emphasizes the importance of coherent management of processes in different stages of team development. Thus, the processes talked about earlier are important in terms of effectivity throughout teamwork.

Multicultural teams, as discussed earlier, must additionally pay attention to the diverse values, behaviors and their interpretation within teams compared to homogeneous teams (Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Halverson, 2008, Johnson et al., 2006). Thus, it may be harder to achieve common values. Members not identifying with the team may become a problem for efficiency (Foo, 2011, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). Confidence in each other and common goals will improve conflict management, integration and communication (Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Tjosvold et al., 2005, Watson et al., 1998). Here, again, training that builds interrelations and trust in teams enables these benefits of well-managed team processes.

The relationship between conflict and effectiveness is studied by many, and the findings indicate a positive relationship with collaboratively managed constructive conflict compared to a negative relationship with “win-lose” -style managed relationship and constructive conflict (Ayoko et al., 2012, De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Gitlow & McNary, 2006, Lu & Wang, 2017). The reasoning for these findings is that with well-managed conflict there is no unresolved conflict left and problems can be solved constructively rather than by creating negative emotions among the members (Ayoko et al., 2012, Desivilya et al., 2010, Gitlow & McNary, 2006). Therefore, conflict and effectiveness have a strong relationship. Whether it will be a negative or a positive one, is up to relationship quality, if processes are shared and agreed upon, and the type and management style of conflict.

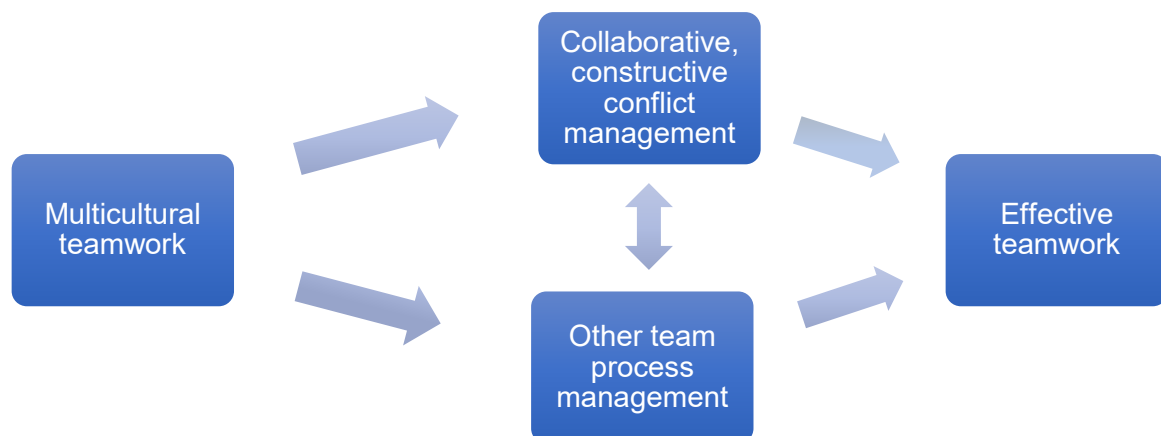
Finally, effectiveness and proper conflict management may lead to organizational gains such as money, satisfaction, efficiency and quality improvements (Plessis 2011) or losses, such as costs, schedule delays, frustration and avoiding of conflict and its resolution (Lu & Wang, 2017). Members can improve effectivity by regular self-reflection (Smith, n.d. b), team efficacy (Watson et al., 1998) and the



sharing and strengthening of knowledge, trust and motivation within the team (Chang, 2010, Smith, n.d. c, Watson et al., 1998). Overall, effective teamwork is the result of multiple team process management efforts of which conflict management largely determines effectivity of work and interrelations.

#### 4.5. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework explains the relationships between the topics talked about. As the literature of the subject has indicated, multicultural teams may lead to efficient conflict management by choosing a collaborative conflict management style and attempting to minimize relationship conflict. This process includes the management of all team processes with a special focus on the beginning stages of team development as they form the future relations and work flow. Finally, when the processes and relationships, including cultural differences, are well-managed within the team, work becomes more effective.



#### 4.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of multicultural teamwork is very popular for a reason, and culturally diverse teamwork may lead to effectivity through appropriate team dynamics, collaboratively managed constructive conflict and well-managed team processes. However, there are a few conditions, such as the integration and cultural competence of the team (Adair et al., 2013, Desivilya et al., 2010, Johnson et al., 2006), common understanding of the conflict management style

used, while minimum relationship conflict present (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Halverson, 2008, Plessis, 2011), and focus on managing team processes in the early stages of team development, when it is vital to establish relationships, processes and integration (Adair et al., 2013, Lu & Wang, 2017, Morris et al., 1998, Ochieng & Price, 2009). Thus, MCTs should be aware of on these common challenges. Other process losses associated with multicultural teams should also be minimized proactively to enable process gains to improve work and team relations. Finally, effectivity leads to member satisfaction and performance improvements, which are beneficial for individual employee satisfaction and organizational gains.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1. Study design**

The chosen design for the research was questionnaires paired with interviews done with students, and interviews of previous experiences done with people in the work life. The questionnaires were the Belbin team role test and the conflict management preference test (see appendix 1), which were handed out to students of Aalto University, Mikkeli Campus, Finland, in the Leadership course. The questionnaires were done in the beginning of the teamwork to guide the upcoming work. The interviews (see appendix 2), in turn, were done in the end of the course reflecting on the teamwork results and the questionnaire results. The interviews with people from work life (see appendix 3) were done after their MCTs projects had ended reflecting on their experiences.

The questionnaires were chosen to support the interview material by reflecting more on the team members in the Leadership course. The team members could reflect on the questionnaires during work, which supported their understanding of the subject as well as the work they had done in the class. The interviews with students, in turn, were chosen for the research because the subject is qualitative and the interviews best let the interviewees to explain their experiences. Interviewing employees of companies supports the research by giving a

perspective of longer lasting multicultural teamwork experiences. The experiences of work life reflect real life situations with companies better as well, because the teams are comprised of members of large companies rather than familiar class mates.

There were 26 students in the Leadership course of Aalto University that completed the Belbin questionnaire and 24 students that completed the conflict management questionnaire. In total, there were 34 students in the class, but one team did not participate in this research. The teams participating in the research had ten members in one team and eight members in the two other teams. Each team had multiple nationalities in them, for example Vietnamese, Finnish, British and French. Genders were equally represented, and the majority of ages of students are in the early 20's. The work life interviewees were Finnish and Russian women with multicultural teamwork experience from the work life. The projects had lasted for a minimum of four months.

## 5.2. Data collection

The data collection process began with the questionnaires being distributed and filled in the Leadership class in Mikkeli, Finland at the beginning of the team project. The teams were randomly selected by the course instructor. The interviews with students, as mentioned earlier, were conducted during the last week of their three-week long teamwork and course. The interviews of people in the work life were non-related to on-going projects. Thus, those interviews were conducted during the three weeks of the Leadership course for convenience and cohesion reasons.

The questionnaires were personally handed out to the class and all results remained anonymous. The paper sheets had personalized symbols on them in order for the participants to get their research results back, but for the research to remain anonymous. The interviews with students were done individually, following a structured interview, in the Aalto University premises. The interviews with employees were done via Skype with a structured interview base as well. On top of the structured questions about the teamwork and conflict experience, the

interviewees told about their general, project related experiences openly. The interviews via Skype took nearly 30 minutes with each interviewee. The interviews with students, in turn, took on average 20 minutes.

The student-interviewees were chosen by contacting the entire class and introducing the research, its purposes and what it entails at first. Two members from each four teams participated in the interview representing their experiences on behalf of their teams. The teams had independent negotiations and decided on the two participants together. Thus, the interviewees were ones that participated actively in teamwork and had relevant experiences to share. The interviewees from companies were contacted via email and Facebook messenger. The research was also introduced to them and the four participants volunteered to participate knowing they also had relevant experiences to share.

### 5.3. Analytical methods

The primary research was qualitative. Therefore, the analytical work was deductive in its nature. The questionnaires were analyzed on Excel by calculating team and member results as well as on Word by making tables illustrating the results. The Belbin questionnaire results were analyzed by recording each highest scoring team role type for each member in the class. The conflict management questionnaire, in turn, recorded preferences of different management styles. The interviews were recorded on Microsoft Word, from where the results were deductively analyzed. As mentioned, the questions were open ended and experienced based, which allowed the analysis method.

## 6. FINDINGS

In this section, first all three student-teams are analyzed by their demographics, Belbin team role results and conflict management style results, both of which theory is discussed in the literature review. After the questionnaire findings, the interview findings are explained. Then, the interviews with employees are described and explained.

### 6.1. Team A questionnaires

Table 1: Team A demographics

Member	Age	Gender	Nationality
A1	22	Female	Finnish
A2	21	Female	Finnish
A3	23	Male	British– Finnish
A4	22	Male	Finnish
A5	25	Male	Finnish
A6	20	Female	Vietnamese
A7	20	Female	Finnish
A8	20	Female	Finnish
A9	21	Male	Finnish
A10	22	Male	Finnish

Team A was the largest one in the Leadership class of Aalto University. The team had 10 members in it with five females and five males. The age pool is from 20 to 25 years and the members are mostly Finnish with one half British person and one Vietnamese person. Finnish members do have a dominating position over other cultural backgrounds, which may result to a minority position of the two other members.

Table 2: Team A Belbin roles

Member	Resource investigator	Team worker	Coordinator	Plant	Monitor evaluator	Shaper	Implementer	Complete finisher
A1		X						
A2			X					
A3								X
A4					X			
A5						X		
A6					X			
A7		X						

A8								X
A9								X
A10						X		

The Belbin results of the research are limited as the numeral results of each questionnaire are not available. However, the results give guideline as to which roles are represented as the prior role of each member. It can be seen that complete finisher is the most common role represented in team A with three members. Monitor evaluator, team worker and shaper all have two results. Coordinator has one result, but implementer, resource investigator and plant are missing.

A common result of complete finisher may result to the team having good outcome quality, as there are three members willing to make the finishing touches to the work. Complete finishers are, however, found to not delegate well, which may affect team A's work negatively. Having multiple team workers may ease the teamwork experience as these roles are found to be diplomatic although they tend to avoid conflict. Monitor evaluators benefit the team as they are logical and strategic although may lack motivation. Shapers also challenge the team and positively add motivation although may seem offending. The lack of resource investigators may have resulted to a lack of networks, lack of plants to the lack of creativity and lack of implementers to the lack of action plans.

Based on the Belbin team role results of team A the output results of this team may be good although the satisfaction results may not be optimal as there are three unrepresented roles that other members of the team may have to compensate for. The output may be negatively impacted from the unrepresented roles as well if the other members cannot compensate, for example, for creativity and action plans.

Table 3: Team A conflict management styles

Member	Collaborating	Compromising	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating
A1	4	9	10	2	5

A2	3	6	7	7	7
A3	4	9	12	3	3
A4	12	4	8	2	4
A5	4	8	9	1	8
A6	4	7	10	1	7
A7	4	8	11	0	7
A8	2	6	12	2	8
A9	1	7	11	4	7
A10	-	-	-	-	-

The conflict management style results are marked: green for desired result, orange for close to desired and red for either too much or too little of that style used in conflict management. The collaborating colors were marked green from 8 to 12, orange at 6 and 7, and red below 6. The compromising and competing colors are green from 5 to 7, orange at 4 and 8, and red below 4 and above 8. The avoiding and accommodating colors are green from 0 to 3, orange at 4 and red above that.

Compromising and avoiding has mostly desired results, which is good. These results may help the team avoid some smaller conflicts that would waste resources if negotiated about. Compromising helps negotiating agreements. Collaborating, competing and accommodating has worse results. Collaborating is not used enough, competing is used too much and accommodating is also used too much. The scores of collaborating and competing indicate a too low willingness of negotiating to find a common agreement. The over use of accommodation, on the contrary however, indicates an over use of being flexible and cooperative to satisfy others' needs.

Overall, it is hard to draw conclusions of the results but in terms of teamwork output the quality may be good if the team achieves good decisions even if decisions are made with a more dominating approach rather than a negotiation. If the decisions dominated over others are not of good quality, the overall quality of output of the team may suffer. The over use of accommodation may balance out

this trait of competing, which can aid the possible conflict situations. Team members may compete over decisions, but if other members are willing to accommodate those decisions simultaneously the team may not have increased conflict. If others are not willing to accommodate competing decisions, however, conflict may be increased.

## 6.2. Team A interviews

Two members, A5 and A7 were interviewed in team A. The interview questions were about their experiences of the Leadership course teamwork. At first the interview established the processes of the team and then the outcomes of work and satisfaction of work. Member A5 and A7 knew a few of their teammates personally, most of them as acquaintances and had a few they were not familiar with. Consequently, they did not use separate time in the beginning of the project to further familiarize them with each other, but began work immediately. Naturally, while working the members did get more familiar with each other, especially towards the end of the work when everyone was more open with communication and comfortable with each other.

Team A did not divide roles or responsibilities for the first half of the project. They saw inefficiencies and less clarity of processes with unclear roles and responsibilities, and thus, decided to establish more defined roles for the rest half of the project. The change was reported by both A5 and A7 to help team processes and clarify tasks. A5 also reported: “once Belbin team roles were known within the team, members began behaving accordingly”, which for this team was beneficial as a sufficient amount of the roles were represented and the team managed to complete tasks well according to A5 and A7.

The cultural differences were reported to dominate over the minority culture, which in team A was Vietnam. In the beginning of the project, A6, the Vietnamese member was left quiet and shy, although closer to the end of the project she became more outspoken. The Finnish members A5 and A7 commented on this equally.



The conflict team A had was constructive although related to a few members. There were a few members attempting to social loaf, which made A7 to confront them and make a win – lose styled decision. Overall, everyone understood the decision and could focus on completing the task rather than creating relationship conflict. The team also reported negotiations to find a common agreement and to avoid relationship conflict through preemptively including everyone in negotiations. Thus, the team had both win – lose and win – win styled conflict management. Conflict affected teamwork by making decision-making slower through “getting a Yes” from every member, as A5 commented, but also it made members learn for future work from mistakes made, for instance from unclear roles.

The team output results were both positive and negative. Member A7 felt she learned assertiveness and leadership skills through having to take directive measures into hand. Member A5 felt satisfied about the experience but would have wished it to be more effective. Both interviewees felt they met the expected results and also could complete tasks in a satisfactory way. Overall, team A performed at a grade three out of five for output quality considering the team cohesion and input of work. For satisfaction team A performed on a level four out of five considering the decisions, even when dominating, were agreed upon and completed with satisfaction.

### 6.3. Team B questionnaires

Table 4: Team B demographics

Member	Age	Gender	Nationality
B1	21	Female	Finnish
B2	22	Male	Finnish
B3	21	Male	British-Finnish
B4	20	Female	Taiwanese
B5	21	Male	Finnish
B6	22	Male	Finnish

B7	23	Male	Finnish
B8	20	Female	Finnish

Team B is the second team of the Aalto University Leadership course. This team has eight members of which three are females and five are males. Similarly, to team A, team B has mostly Finnish people in it, with one half Finnish, half British member and one Taiwanese member. The age range goes from 20 to 23 years.

Table 5: Team B Belbin roles

Member	Resource Investigator	Team worker	Coordinator	Plant	Monitor evaluator	Shaper	Implementer	Complete finisher
B1	X							
B2				X				
B3							X	
B4			X					
B5					X			
B6			X					
B7					X			
B8		X						

The Belbin team role questionnaire results report the strongest team role result for each member in team B. The results are limited as the numeral amounts between roles cannot be seen. However, this table indicates the primary division of roles in the team.

Team B has two coordinators and two monitor evaluators. Having two coordinators in one team can be risky as they are leaders by character, but also can provide a mature viewpoint on work. Two monitor evaluators may indicate the team to have a strong source for logic and strategy although difficulties with staying motivated and inspired. Team B also has a resource investigator, a plant, a team worker and an implementer. Overall, there is a wider selection of roles represented, but a shaper and a complete finisher are missing.

Having a wide selection of roles can contribute to a diverse selection of skills and ways of working that can benefit a team. It also means, there are less people competing to represent the same role and its characteristics. Missing a shaper may mean team B may be missing motivation to stay focused on the task, and missing a complete finisher may result to more accidental mistakes in the end product.

Based on the Belbin results, team B has better chances of completing work, as more role characteristics are focused on the working part of tasks rather than completing the finishing touches to it, and more roles are equally represented compared to team A. An equal representation of roles may also make work more satisfying as long as the missing shaper and complete finisher role do not cause the team problems.

Table 6: Team B conflict management styles

Member	Collaborating	Compromising	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating
B1	0	6	9	8	7
B2	6	6	10	1	7
B3	3	8	10	3	6
B4	9	7	9	0	5
B5	1	7	10	6	6
B6	6	7	9	4	4
B7	7	3	9	4	7
B8	2	9	10	2	7

Team B has similar results in conflict management styles to team A. Compromising and avoiding have the most desired results, and competing and accommodating have the least desired results. Collaborating results are not optimal but half of the results are close to desired. Overall, collaborating is being under used or almost used enough, competing is used too much and accommodating also is being over used.

Having acceptable results in compromising indicates a balance between assertiveness and cooperativeness. Avoidance indicates flexibility and uncooperativeness, and with smaller conflicts that can be bypassed avoiding may be a good method to use. All undesired results of competing and accommodating may mean that the team, similar to team A, as moments of certain members competing and dominating decisions with others accommodating those decisions, and other moments of different members being in those positions on the opposite sides.

Based on the conflict management style results work output quality and work satisfaction cannot be predicted with certainty. The outcome is dependent on how many members compete over the same decisions and how members can decide when to accommodate rather than compete. If these styles are balanced, the team may have good output and satisfaction quality.

#### 6.4. Team B interviews

For team B members B3 and B4 were interviewed regarding their teamwork experiences from the course. Both members had mostly acquaintances in the team and also began work without having a kick-off meeting with getting to know each other. The members commented they did get to know each other some more during work.

The roles of team B were not especially divided and defined, but as the tasks the team had during the projects were similar and repetitive, roles were divided by taking turns on completing tasks. B3 felt these turns and roles made their work more effective and “less conflict was generated, as every member had their own turn”. B4 felt when tasks were not divided clearly, she could only follow the others, which was less effective. Culture, on the other hand, did not bring any benefits for B3, but B4 thought her education background from Taiwan did help her offer new perspectives for the team.

Conflict for team B was relationship based unlike the other teams in the class. B3 reported the conflict he experienced was based on some absences in the

beginning of the course, which he was a part of that created relationship conflict towards these people as they contributed to the team too little. He was not, however, offended by it as he understood the work missed had to be made up for and was able to complete the following tasks. B4 had trouble with English and expressing herself, and thus, could also not contribute to the team enough, which she felt created some relationship conflict. Constructive conflict was limited as tasks were always completed well.

Conflict management was win – win styled in team B. The interviewee B3 reported: “although some decisions were dominative, we all agreed on the outcomes and were satisfied with the decisions”. He also felt the initiative conflict he experienced was good for the team, because it made everyone learn for future work and similar issues never arose again. B4 also experienced a better atmosphere and effectivity of work, when she gained courage and participated more after the conflict she experienced.

Overall, team B was satisfied with their teamwork experience, according to B3 and B4. B3 was pleased with the fact that the tasks were completed in a team environment as he learned how to actively help others and receive constructive feedback better. Both members also felt the output they generated was of good quality, and time usage was also effective and the team did not have to work much outside class hours.

Compared to the expectations given by the Belbin and conflict management style questionnaires the interview results correlate sufficiently. It can be seen from the interviews that there were no significant problems from the few missing roles. The competing and accommodating conflict management styles were also in balance, as there was no competition over decision between members. Rather there were different individuals separately making a few dominating decisions that others at the time accommodated. Numerally, team B gets grade 5 from outcome of teamwork and a grade 4 from satisfaction of work from the small cohesion problem arisen from cultural diversity.

## 6.5. Team C questionnaires

Table 7: Team C demographics

Member	Age	Gender	Nationality
C1	21	Female	Finnish-Swedish
C2	22	Female	Chinese
C3	23	Male	French
C4	20	Female	Finnish
C5	20	Female	Finnish
C6	20	Female	Finnish
C7	23	Female	Finnish
C8	21	Male	Finnish

Team C has eight members in it of which two are males and five are females. The age range varies from 20 to 23. Team C was the most culturally diverse compared to team A and B with Finnish, one half Finn, half Swede, one Chinese and one French member in it.

Table 8: Team C Belbin roles

Member	Resource Investigator	Team worker	Coordinator	Plant	Monitor evaluator	Shaper	Implementer	Complete finisher
C1		X						
C2						X		
C3								X
C4	X							
C5							X	
C6		X						
C7		X						
C8				X				

The most common result in team C is team worker with three results. Resource investigator, plant, shaper, implementer and complete finisher all have one result. The missing roles for team C are coordinator and monitor evaluator.

Having three team workers in one team can either be a risk or result in favorable team dynamics. Team workers can bring the members together well and consider the interests of others. Team workers may also be indecisive and avoid conflict too much. Otherwise, the roles are overall well represented within team C. Missing a coordinator may result in a lack for a leadership personality, and missing a monitor evaluator may lead to a lack of a source for logic.

The expectation for team C to complete work is satisfactory based on these results. However, perfect completion may not be reached if the number of team workers become overwhelming for the team. The risk for the missing roles not being compensated for is smaller than the one with team A as there are less roles unrepresented.

Table 9: Team C conflict management styles

Member	Collaborating	Compromising	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating
C1	6	3	7	3	10
C2	5	8	7	1	8
C3	4	6	12	2	6
C4	0	5	9	4	10
C5	3	6	6	10	5
C6	2	6	8	3	11
C7	-	-	-	-	-
C8	3	7	11	3	4

The conflict management style questionnaire results from team C are different from the first two teams. Here, the scores for avoiding and compromising are still mostly desirable. The scores for accommodating and collaborating, however, are the undesired ones. The competing scores are half desired half undesired.

Having desired results for compromising and avoiding indicates that team C should be able to compromise and avoid conflict and decision-making an appropriate amount. On the other hand, the results indicate that collaboration is not used enough and accommodation is used too much. Thus, members may not

negotiate enough but rather willingly accept others' decisions. The results for competing are more favorable with team C than A and B, as competing can be a very dominative conflict management style and there should not be too many competitive members within one team. Overall, team C has cooperative and flexible members as accommodation is overall the most used style.

The output expectations for team C, based on the conflict management style results, are good. The results do not show anything concerning in terms of teamwork, although some more assertiveness and collaborating in conflict management would be appropriate. Satisfaction may increase with increased assertiveness in teamwork, but team C has good satisfaction expectations as there are less competitive conflict managers.

#### 6.6. Team C interviews

For team C members C3 and C8 were interviewed. In this team, C3 was a new exchange student and did not personally know his teammates whereas C8 knew almost everyone in the team. Team C also began work immediately without a kick-off meeting and only familiarized each other beside work. The roles, however, were divided on a task basis clearly although overall everyone participated in various roles.

Members C3 and C8 did not see any significance with the decision of not assigning defined roles for the entire duration of teamwork rather than having new ones based on each task. The members of the team are all business students with similar experience, which aids this type of a strategy. In a longer project with multiple, dissimilar competencies required this strategy may become inconvenient. The cultural diversities in team C were the most helpful compared to team A and B. C3, the French member had an extensive, personal interest in the subject, and therefore, participated very actively and provided a new viewpoint to work. In other teams, the culturally diverse members were left to a minority position and did not find a way to participate equally much.



The conflict in the teamwork was based on misunderstandings. C3 commented that he and another member had some relationship conflict, when a decision was disagreed upon and there was an argument. The argument was found to be about a misunderstanding after it could be constructively solved. Member C8 said the conflict he experienced was: “relationship conflict based on inactive members and misunderstandings about responsibilities”. As it was based on his own mistake, he willingly compensated for it and no further conflict arose. Both C3 and C8 members felt that as conflict was based on misunderstandings, they could be solved collaboratively as members negotiated the situation. The conflict also improved the teamwork for the future, because everyone learned from previous conflict.

The members interviewed were both very happy about their teamwork experiences and that the tasks were conducted in teams rather than individually. The team also expects good results and are satisfied with using time effectively. Team C definitely met their output and satisfaction expectations, although the relationship conflict was surprising as the questionnaire results indicated the member would have preferred to accommodate rather than confront. For output team C gets a five out of five, and for satisfaction the team gets a four out of five.

### 6.7. Interviews with the employees

Table 10: Employee demographics

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Nationality	Tenure	Project
X	Mid 20s	Female	Russian-Finnish	Functional consultant	Four-month digital transformation project
Y	Mid 40s	Female	Finnish	Category manager / specialist	Year-long product development project
Z	Mid 20s	Female	Finnish	Anti-money laundering specialist	Year-long know-your-customer financial law

					project
S	Mid 20s	Female	Finnish	Account manager	Year-long outsourcing project

The interviews of employees in the work life are from a consulting company that worked with a digitization project, the bakery industry of a product development project, the banking industry of a know-your-customer law related project, and a technology company of an outsourcing project. All of the interviewees had specific roles in their project and competencies they offered to the dynamics of the team.

Person X had the most dynamic, agile project, where every morning detailed roles were discussed and all members were expected to be able to assume new roles daily. Overall, she did offer a business related functional consultant viewpoint to the team. Person Y was representing the market of Finland in her project and had more defined, stable responsibilities. Person Z was also representing Finland's market in her project as well as the perspective of an anti-money laundering specialist. Person S, in turn, was the member of the team transferring her knowledge of her role in Finland to a new market that in the future would have taken care of her position.

The teams were all multicultural and the durations of the projects significantly longer than the one the students were involved with. Person X had Finnish, Swedish, Latvian, Turkish and Spanish members in her team. The members were not familiar each other but had a kick-off meeting in the beginning of work, where members got to know each other better. The conflict in the team was based on unmet expectations of quality, competencies and time consumption. Some of these conflicts were solved by adding team processes concerning quality assurance, but conflict about time consumption could not be solved. Therefore, conflict impacted work by making it more time consuming, but on the other hand, cultural diversities made work more effective as the team had a diverse skill set. Overall, person X was satisfied with the work experience and expected results were met by the team, although she would have wanted to improve the effectivity with time usage.

Person Y had Finnish, Estonian and Danish members in her team that she was partially familiar with. The team of person Y also had divided areas of responsibilities, but positions were defined differently in the countries, and it created some confusion. The majority of the conflict in the team was, however, about perceptions of time and directness of communication. The cultural differences also added some complexities to the project, because according to person Y: “different cultured members prefer different tastes with bakery products”. Overall, person Y was satisfied with the teamwork experience and felt cultural differences offered a richness to the team processes and output, although the complexity added necessary negotiations that a homogeneous team would not have needed to have.

The third interviewee, person Z, had members in her team from the Nordic countries and Poland. She had mostly teammates she did not know personally and they did not have a kick-off meeting. The roles were, similarly to interviewee Y, divided based on areas of expertise and each representative of a country drove the interests of that country. The cultural differences were expected to not cause problems by person Z, which ended up surprising her. She had expected the cultures to be similar enough to not create differences, but for instance, Finnish people ended up being more direct and punctual than Swedes whereas Swedes were more indirect and casual. The conflict this team had arose from these unexpected cultural differences as well as the different interests the countries represented. In the end, the conflicts were solved based on the country who had the largest market power, which was not a great method for person Z as she represented Finland, a smaller market power country.

Person Z also noticed conflict was time consuming especially with indirect cultures as everyone had to agree before decisions were made. Conflict management styles are also different between cultures. She found that direct cultures, such as the Danes solved conflict in a more dominating, competitive way, whereas Swedes used a collaborative approach. Overall, she was satisfied with the results although work was frustrating at times.

Lastly, interviewee S had a year-long project with Finnish, Swedish and Polish members that were all new acquaintances to her. The team had a kick-off meeting as well and had a hierarchical team with defined roles. The conflict her team had was based on technology, as this team was virtual, and again, on cultural differences about punctuality and directness of communication. As the members got to know each other, S said: “the amount of conflict decreased towards the end of the project and the smoothness of work increased”. The hierarchy in the team also helped solving conflict, because the chain of communication was clear. Person S felt that in her experience, cultural differences did not make teamwork easier as the cultural differences were too large. Overall, she still learned from the experience and was happy to have had it.

## **7. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **7.1. Interview analysis**

Overall, the issues team A had, were mainly about the lacking team roles and processes in the beginning of work. This resulted in less effectivity and conflict about social loafing, although they managed to solve it constructively and create roles and processes. The other issue was the shyness of the non-Finnish member, although she became comfortable with the other team later on in the project. The main benefit of team A came from the conflict by teaching the members who took the lead on solving the conflict to be assertive and take initiative.

Team B was a very effective team and had clear plans for working from the beginning. They experienced less conflict because their task was repetitive, thus every member had their individual turn of completing it resulting in balanced workloads. Team B also experienced members helping each other and giving timely feedback, which increased their satisfaction of teamwork. Their conflict was based on absences. Those members willingly made up for it as they understood the division of work related to the missed sessions.

Team C was interesting because they had clear relationship conflict between two members that resulted in avoidance of their relationship within the team. The conflict arose from two strong personalities not compromising but competing with a decision. The conflict was solved, however, when one member realized a misunderstanding, and therefore, work continued. Here, it can be seen that if one team has many similar types of team roles or conflict management styles used, they can collide. The main benefit of team C was their higher level of cultural diversity that they managed to leverage. This was the result of members being outgoing and active, and thus, not dominated by the Finnish culture.

The employee X's team had a very agile project in the consulting industry and their issues arose from cultural diversity that created misunderstandings. At first, the members struggled with knowing how to communicate to each other and interpret the communication of others. These misunderstandings can happen if the cultures are unfamiliar, the members are unfamiliar to each other or the team has not established guidelines for output expectations. As conflict happened, more guidelines were set and team members learned how to communicate together and more of the diverse skills could be utilized.

Member Y's team had issues with cultural diversity too, this time related on diverse taste preferences of baked goods that the team had conclude on. Some decisions were made solely based on market power and some on negotiations. Larger companies may make decision-making faster paced by giving more power to certain members of a team to save resources. Member Y did not see conflict created from this, as she understood it was a smart decision for her, a representative of Finland's smaller market, to support an opinion of a market power decision-maker rather than creating her own agendas. Thus, she used compromising.

Interviewee Z's approach on teamwork was diplomatic. She recognized different ways of communicating and managing conflict from different countries that she adjusted herself to. She also knew she had to find a creative way of getting her opinions heard from larger market power representatives as she was representing

the specific bank of Finland. Because she was aware of teamwork dynamics, as conflict happened she rather took an active part in starting negotiations to solve them than waited on someone compromising on their part. As she was a team worker or another Belbin role similar to team worker, her approach helped the team stay on track and remain collaborative decision-making rather than dominative.

Interviewee S's team had a different dynamic than the other teams. Her team had more hierarchy and the task concerned her teaching others her skills. Thus, she had a dominating position. A part of this teaching and learning project were quality and deadline issues concerning a specific culture. The team could not solve these issues entirely, possibly, because the team was virtual. Virtual team members still work among their own culture and do not experience the ways of working they are supposed to learn around them. The team did, however, benefit from hierarchy as conflict was solved through hierarchy and its communication chain. In the end, less conflict was present and work was more fluent as the members had experienced a learning curve concerning the project and team processes.

## 7.2. Interview comparisons

Compared to the interviews with students the research done with the employees could reflect more on realistic settings of work life. The length and complexity of projects are more extensive. Therefore, each work life team needed more team processes in place, especially ones for conflict situations as conflict was more frequent in the longer projects than the shorter ones. The cultural differences also had a larger effect on the team dynamics in longer projects. Thus, the interviews reflected on the issues cultural diversity creates, and different types of issues certain cultures have between others.

The projects in work life also differ from the ones in the Leadership course in terms of how familiar members are with each other. Although the class had new exchange students and all students do not know each other personally, everyone are still familiar with each other. There is a personal interest to not cause conflict

between friends. People can also predict and interpret behaviour and communication of classmates better than unfamiliar colleagues. The student-teams also had three hours daily to work together physically, whereas some employees worked in different countries than their teammates.

Overall, the projects the employees had included a higher level of personal involvement with task importance deriving from the longer duration and professional accountability. Thus, it was interesting to see, if this personal accountability made the employees behave around conflict differently. This was not the case, however, because both students and employees wanted to solve conflict and put new processes and rules into place, when any was created. Although the willingness to solve conflict was equal, the reasons behind conflict in work life were more related on business interests.

### 7.3. Hypothesis testing

The hypotheses are tested by reflecting on the empirical research. The first hypothesis: “established roles within teams decrease conflict and improve effectivity by setting clear responsibilities and tasks to certain people that improve the flow of processes”, was proven in the research. Interviewees A5 and A7 also found that when the team lacked defined roles, the effectivity decreased and amount of conflict increased. C3 told that when the roles were collectively decided and agreed upon, it made tasks and processes clear. Overall, the interviewees all found when the team members agreed on areas of responsibility, less confusion, misunderstandings and more effectivity existed. The members also trusted each other more, as there was less uncertainty about how tasks would get completed.

The second hypothesis: “cultural diversity can make teamwork more effective, if the diversities are well-managed, meaning that team members get to know the cultures within the team in the beginning to avoid miscommunication and to stay aware of the cultural cues”, however, was only partially proven. Some interviewees felt that cultural differences created a hindrance to teamwork. This happened when cultural differences were not managed as well as when cultural differences were too large to be understood. The teams that managed to

familiarize cultures within teams, could leverage the diverse skills of their MCTs. These teams were, for instance team C, where the experiences of Chinese C2 and French C3 were well-utilized.

The third hypothesis: “the more relationship conflict exists in a team, the less conflict can be dealt with constructively, which decreases productivity by shifting attention from tasks to relational problems and conflict”, was proven not true by the research. The students had relationship conflict, but managed to solve it in a constructive way. Relationship conflict with students did not affect their ability to work cohesively nor cause relational problems. The personal relationships students had within teams may have helped, because the team members had a personal interest in solving conflict. The employees were less familiar with their teams, and had less relationship conflict arise, possibly, because it was mostly avoided. Thus, teams that know fellow members less may avoid relationship conflict as it is harder to predict the behavior of unfamiliar people.

Hypothesis four: “the higher the score on collaborative conflict management style, the better it fits a multicultural team with diversity, meaning that the existing differing values and opinions will get solved by considering the benefit of all parties and less conflict remains unsolved”, could not be proven true. The MCTs in the empirical research used conflict management styles based on negotiation, but the styles were still rather a combination and a balance of different styles. For example, accommodation and competing was used by different members that preferred both styles by one person making a dominative decision, and another member accommodating it. Collaboration was used less. Therefore, teams do not need to use collaboration, but still should focus on solving conflict by negotiating. Consequently, the decisions made were still collectively agreed on, although the process did not include a collective discussion.

The last, fifth, hypothesis: “teams that spend time on establishing common team processes, such as ways of communication, conflict resolution and decision-making processes, in the beginning of work are more effective than ones that do not do this”, was correctly hypothesized. Although the conflict management styles within teams were not the same, the teams still had other processes agreed on



since the beginning of work. Team A established their processes only half way through the project, and performed worse compared to other teams. For example, A5 reported their team procrastinated and were confused about processes until they defined ones. The significance of this hypothesis was emphasized with the work life teams, because the projects they had were more complex and defined processes were vital. Conflicts disturbed processes, which led to the need for more processes. After these were created the work was fluent again.

The conceptual framework was proven to be almost entirely true by the empirical research. MCTs benefitted from the well-managed processes that were put in place at the beginning of work. The teams also worked more effectively, when conflict remained constructive on average in student and employee teams, although the management style was not always collaborating. Thus, MCT effectivity is strongly linked to well-managed team processes and suitable conflict management styles, although the conflict management styles can differ between team members as long as they fit the situation and team dynamics well.

#### 7.4. Main findings

The literature about the subject is extensive and many authors find contradictory results for similar research questions. This research found that multicultural teams can be an effective way of utilizing diverse resources, but they have to be carefully managed to maintain the effectivity along some other research (Adair et al., 2013, Foo, 2011, Gibson and Ross Grubb, 2005, Selvadurai & Dasgupta, 2016). Team integration, inclusion and common processes are the main methods of achieving effectivity in MCTs (ibid). In this research, these factors were considered through whether teams are familiar with fellow team members, spend time on getting to know each other, and if teams have established roles and responsibilities.

The findings reflected an additional need for cultural competence and inclusion, in order of all members being utilized in the team properly. For example, the employees from work life felt all cultures did not understand each other well and some were not trained to the same level as others, which decreased inclusion in

some teams. The students in teams A and B, also had a few minority culture members that were left to the background on the side of the dominant culture, which Foo (2011) also realized to be an issue. Cultural competence training would have helped their team and process cohesion, as the literature found (Adair et al., 2013, Gibson & Ross Grubb, 2005, Halverson, 2008, Johnson et al, 2006, LaFramboise et al., 1993). A few teams, team C and person X's team, were able to achieve cultural integration, and proved that working for it is worthy as the diversity of skills and experiences could be fully utilized.

The roles and processes throughout team development were divided within teams well, which led to decreased conflict and increased effectivity. These positive effects were strong enough to maintain a positive teamwork experience and satisfactory results, although some cultural differences could have been better managed. Halverson (2008) and Desivilya et al. (2010) agree with common processes being important and consider them a part of pre-emptive and reactive conflict management efforts, which may eventually lead to effectivity and satisfaction. Smith and Yates (n.d. a) state that processes may be disrupted by poorly integrated cultural differences, which did not occur with the student-teams. The employee-teams, however, had quality and deadline issues from certain culture members. New processes were put in place to minimize these disruptions.

Conflict and its management are a subgroup of team processes, and it was interesting to see how they affect teamwork as a whole. Foo (2011), Lu and Wang (2017) and Woehr et al. (2013) have studied the correlation between cultural diversity and conflict. All in all, the studies find multicultural teams to have challenges, when the members do not identify with the team or have good relations within the team. The reasoning behind multicultural team complexity is the diversity of values, increased conflict from the differences and a smaller degree of cohesion (ibid).

The studies as well as the empirical research found a positive relationship between conflict and cultural diversity too. These were innovativeness, diversity of skills and improved decision-making process. Team C utilized these process

gains best out of the student teams, because their culturally diverse members were outspoken and comfortable with the team setting.

Overall, effectivity of multicultural teams consisted of well-managed teams, their members and processes. Whether conflict is constructive or relationship based and affects teamwork is dependent on the team relations, conflict situation and task involvement. Cultural differences have to be taken into account in teams carefully, as ignoring them can lead to misunderstandings, more conflict and ineffectiveness. If a member experiences a cultural minority position, it can lead to discouragement and detachment from the team. As a whole, teams that collaborated with work and decision-making performed better than teams that remained unfamiliar to each other and could not find a common goal.

#### 7.5. Recommendations

Companies will benefit from the study, if the findings of the study will be transformed into training of teams. Multicultural teams should definitely be used, but this study strongly suggest an addition of cultural awareness training and a session for creating common processes.

Conflict can be well-managed in most cases, when the relations are personal and there is an incentive to consider the benefit of fellow members. Therefore, the beginning stages of teamwork should include kick-off meeting that is more informal and lets members get to know each other. Interactive communication would improve as the members understood more of others' expectations, priorities and ways of communication. With existing personal relations, there will also be a larger involvement in the team objective that can be an incentive for the members to remain conflict constructive and not destruct work with unresolved conflict.

Cultural awareness training should be a part of the kick-off meetings and include explaining others' cultural backgrounds and preferred ways of working. Daily work should consistently include all members of the team and further invite cultures to share knowledge together. If a team finds inefficiencies in work, additional steps

and processes may be added to minimize mistakes and inefficiency. Some processes may be later deleted as learning curve effects happen.

#### 7.6. Limitations

The limitations of this study are partially related to the short length of the research and it being a bachelor's thesis. Thus, the research is a learning project and attempt to doing an extensive bachelor's thesis. The other limitations of the research are, to some extent, consequences of this limitation. For example, with a more extensive study, the teams could have been observed more closely. Relationship conflict is hard to define, and many team members would prefer to classify all conflict by being constructive. Thus, the types of conflicts should be defined with more detail or observed in teams for definition to clearly analyze constructive and relationship conflict separately. The effects of cultural diversity are another factor that is hard to explain verbally, where a longer study would benefit from an observational approach or simply a more extensive interview process.

However, the main limitation with the research was that the Belbin team role questionnaire results were not reported as the numeral divisions of scores between roles for each member. Thus, it could not be seen how clearly one fits a member or if a member has multiple equally fitting roles.

#### 7.7. Implications for international business

This research is relevant for international business as multicultural teamwork is becoming more common and an asset for companies, if correctly used. Multicultural teamwork can be utilized physically in one location of multinational corporations as well as virtually with the members being geographically distributed in various locations. Thus, the results of the correlations between multicultural teamwork, conflict and its management, and effectivity from this research can be used by companies to further utilize the positive effects of MCTs. Cultural differences and conflict within teams can end up benefiting or costing a

company, which is why international companies with existing multicultural employee bases should learn to utilize the benefits of MCTs.

#### 7.8. Further research

Further research should examine the hypotheses not entirely supported by this research. In other words, further research should explore how to manage and utilize cultural differences the best way without having the differences create a hindrance. Research may also study if the benefit of cultural diversity is based upon certain cultures working together. For example, there was an indication of direct communication, punctual cultures, such as Finnish and Danish people, being able to work together coherently faster than Finnish and Turkish, who were, at least in this research, on the other sides of these cultural dimensions.

The research should also examine whether the amount of relationship conflict takes attention away from managing conflict constructively as suggested. As mentioned previously, the line between constructive and relationship conflict should be defined in more detail in the future for more accurate classification. Finally, further research can expand on the longitudinal length of this study and observe cultural differences and the type of conflict more, because these subjects are challenging to interview objectively.

Other research may continue from this paper to more specific subjects and areas by perhaps choosing a specific industry, company size or team size. This research had interviewees from different industries and saw some variations of industry specific processes. For instance, consultation work is far more dynamic and agile compared to a financial project with a bank, where all plans were premade by the corporation. Larger and smaller companies may have a similar difference as larger corporations divide their resources early and have hierarchical roles defined. Smaller companies and start-ups, however, have less defined roles and processes, where work is more dynamic. The team size and level of multiculturalism may also be studied further.

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## APPENDICES

### 1. Belbin team role test:

15315 PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

# Team Formation Exercise

## DOCUMENT 3

### BELBIN'S Teamwork Self-Perception Inventory

**DIRECTIONS:** For each section distribute a total of ten points among the sentences which you think best describe your behavior. These points may be distributed among several sentences: in extreme cases they might be spread among all the sentences or ten points may be given to a single sentence. Enter the points in the Self Perception Inventory: Points Table.

#### 1 What I believe I can contribute to a team:

- (a) I think I can quickly see and take advantage of new opportunities.
- (b) I can work well with a very wide range of people.
- (c) Producing ideas is one of my natural assets.
- (d) My ability rests in being able to draw people out whenever I detect they have something of value to contribute to group objectives.
- (e) My capacity to follow through has much to do with my personal effectiveness.
- (f) I am ready to face temporary unpopularity if it leads to worthwhile results in the end.
- (g) I am quick to sense what is likely to work in a situation with which I am familiar.
- (h) I can offer a reasoned case for alternative courses of action without introducing bias or prejudice.

#### 2 If I have a possible shortcoming in teamwork, it could be that:

- (a) I am not at ease unless meetings are well structured and controlled and generally well conducted.
- (b) I am inclined to be too generous towards others who have a valid viewpoint that has not been given a proper airing.
- (c) I have a tendency to talk a lot once the group gets on to new ideas.
- (d) My objective outlook makes it difficult for me to join in readily and enthusiastically with colleagues.

- (e) I am sometimes seen as forceful and authoritarian if there is a need to get something done.
- (f) I find it difficult to lead from the front, perhaps because I am over-responsive to group atmosphere.
- (g) I am apt to get too caught up in ideas that occur to me and so lose track of what is happening.
- (h) My colleagues tend to see me as worrying unnecessarily over detail and the possibility that things may go wrong.

**3 When involved in a project with other people:**

- (a) I have an aptitude for influencing people without pressurizing them.
- (b) My general vigilance prevents careless mistakes and omissions being made.
- (c) I am ready to press for action to make sure that the meeting does not waste time or lose sight of the main objective.
- (d) I can be counted on to contribute something original.
- (e) I am always ready to back a good suggestion in the common interest.
- (f) I am keen to look for the latest in new ideas and developments.
- (g) I believe my capacity for cool judgments is appreciated by others.
- (h) I can be relied upon to see that all essential work is organized.

**4 My characteristic approach to group work is that:**

- (a) I have a quiet interest in getting to know colleagues better.
- (b) I am not reluctant to challenge the views of others or to hold a minority view myself.
- (c) I can usually find a line of argument to refute unsound propositions.
- (d) I think I have a talent for making things work once a plan has to be put into operation.
- (e) I have a tendency to avoid the obvious and to come out with the unexpected.
- (f) I bring a touch of perfectionism to any team job I undertake.
- (g) I am ready to make use of contacts outside the group itself.
- (h) While I am interested in all views, I have no hesitation in making up my mind once a decision has to be made.

**5 I gain satisfaction in a job because:**

- (a) I enjoy analyzing situations and weighing up all the possible choices.
- (b) I am interested in finding practical solutions to problems.
- (c) I like to feel I am fostering good working relationships.
- (d) I can have a strong influence on decisions.
- (e) I can meet people who may have something new to offer.
- (f) I can get people to agree on a necessary course of action.
- (g) I feel in my element where I can give a task my full attention.
- (h) I like to find a field that stretches my imagination.

**6 If I am suddenly given a difficult task with limited time and unfamiliar people:**

- (a) I would feel like retiring to a corner to devise a way out of the impasse before developing a line.
- (b) I would be ready to work with the person who showed the most positive approach, however difficult he/she might be.
- (c) I would find some way of reducing the size of the task by establishing what different individuals might best contribute.
- (d) My natural sense of urgency would help to ensure that we did not fall behind schedule.
- (e) I believe I would keep cool and maintain my capacity to think straight.

- (f) I would retain a steadiness of purpose in spite of the pressures.  
 (g) I would be prepared to take a positive lead if I felt the group was making no progress.  
 (h) I would open up discussion with a view to stimulating new thoughts and getting something moving.

**7 With reference to the problems to which I am subject in working in groups:**

- (a) I am apt to show my impatience with those who are obstructing progress.  
 (b) Others may criticize me for being too analytical and insufficiently intuitive.  
 (c) My desire to ensure that work is properly done can hold up proceedings.  
 (d) I tend to get bored rather easily and rely on 1 or 2 stimulating people to spark me off.  
 (e) I find it difficult to get started unless the goals are clear.  
 (f) I am sometimes poor at explaining and clarifying complex points that occur to me.  
 (g) I am conscious of demanding from others the things I cannot do myself.  
 (h) I hesitate to get my points across when I run up against real opposition.

REF: R. Meredith Belbin, Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail, Butterworth-Heinemann, Jordan Hill, Oxford, 1993

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Self-Perception Inventory: Points Table**

Section	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	Total
1									10
2									10
3									10
4									10
5									10
6									10
7									10
Grand Total									70

Transpose the scores taken from the points table above, entering them section by section in the table below. Then add up the points in each column to give a total team-role distribution score.

Sect		IM		COH		SH		PL		RI		ME		TW		CF
1	g		d		f		c		a		h		b		e	
2	a		b		e		g		c		d		f		h	
3	h		a		c		d		f		q		e		b	
4	d		h		b		e		g		c		a		f	

5	b		f		d		h		e		a		c		g	
6	f		c		g		a		h		e		b		d	
7	e		g		a		f		d		b		h		c	
TOT																

### Interpretation of Total Scores

The highest score on team-role will indicate how best you can make your mark in a management or project team. The next highest scores can denote back-up team roles towards which you should shift it for some reason there is less group need for a primary team-role.

The two lowest scores in team-role imply possible areas of weakness. But rather than attempting to reform in this area you may be better advised to seek a colleague with complementary strengths.

Descriptions of the team-roles are given on the next page.

### Useful People to Have In Teams

Type	Typical Features	Positive Qualities	Allowable Weaknesses
<b>Implementer (IM)</b>	Conservative, dutiful, predictable	Organizing ability, practical common sense, hard-working, self-discipline.	Lack of flexibility, unresponsiveness to unproven ideas.
<b>Coordinator (CO)</b>	Calm, self-confident, controlled.	A capacity for treating and welcoming all potential contributors on their merits and without prejudice. A strong sense of objectives.	No more than ordinary in terms of intellect or creative ability.
<b>Shaper (SH)</b>	Highly-strung, outgoing, dynamic.	Drive and readiness to challenge inertia, ineffectiveness, complacency or self-deception.	Proneness to provocation, irritation and impatience.
<b>Plant (PL)</b>	Individualistic, serious-minded, unorthodox.	Genius, imagination, intellect, knowledge	Up in the clouds, inclined to disregard practical details or protocol.

<b>Resource Investigator (RI)</b>	Extroverted, enthusiastic, curious, communicative.	A capacity for contacting people and exploring anything new. An ability to respond to challenge.	Liable to lose interest once the initial fascination has passed.
<b>Monitor-Evaluator (ME)</b>	Sober, unemotional, prudent.	Judgement, discretion, hard-headedness.	Lacks inspiration or the ability to motivate others.
<b>Team-Worker (TW)</b>	Socially-orientated, rather mild, sensitive.	An ability to respond to people and situation; and to promote team spirit.	Indecisiveness at moments of crisis.
<b>Completer-Finisher (CF)</b>	Painstaking, orderly, conscientious, anxious.	A capacity to follow through. Perfectionism.	A tendency to worry about small things. A reluctance to "let go".
<b>Specialist (SP)</b>	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated.	Provides knowledge or technical skills in rare supply.	Contributes on only a narrow front.

## 2. Conflict management style test

### Your conflict management style

From each pair, you should choose the statement which describes your behavior better.

1.
  - a. Usually I'm assertive in accomplishing my own goals.
  - b. I'm collecting second hand opinions and submitting the problem to public discussions.
2.
  - a. I always play a square game and I encourage other person to do the same.
  - b. When the conflict starts I always try to pursue my own goal.
3.
  - a. Once developed I do not change my opinion.
  - b. I prefer to give up persuasion and indicate directly the best solution of the problem.
4.
  - a. Sometimes I sacrifice my own goal to the benefit of other person.
  - b. I think that the reasons of dissent are very often not worth enough to quarrel.
5.
  - a. I prefer to accept somebody else's point of view than expose myself to quarrel.
  - b. I avoid strong-minded people.
6.
  - a. I like to cooperate with others and jointly look into their arguments.
  - b. I think that most of expressed thoughts, including mine, are not worth much as arguments.
7.
  - a. In difficult situation I try to look for a compromise.
  - b. Usually I'm assertive in accomplishing my own goals.
8.
  - a. When the conflict starts I always try to pursue my own goal.

- b. For a conflict resolution I opt for a neutral ground.
- 9.
  - a. I like to meet others half-way.
  - b. Once developed I do not change my opinion.
- 10.
  - a. I think that the reasons of dissent are very often not worth enough to quarrel.
  - b. In difficult situation I try to look for a compromise.
- 11.
  - a. For a conflict resolution I opt for a neutral ground.
  - b. I avoid strong-minded people.
- 12.
  - a. I think that most of expressed thoughts, including mine, are not worth much as arguments.
  - b. I like to meet others half-way.
- 13.
  - a. Usually I'm assertive in accomplishing my own goals.
  - b. Sometimes I sacrifice my own goal to the benefit of other person.
- 14.
  - a. I prefer to accept somebody else's point of view than expose myself to quarrel.
  - b. When the conflict starts I always try to pursue my own goal.
- 15.
  - a. Once developed I do not change my opinion.
  - b. I like to cooperate with others and jointly look into their arguments.
- 16.
  - a. In difficult situation I try to look for a compromise.
  - b. Sometimes I sacrifice my own goal to the benefit of other person.
- 17.
  - a. I prefer to accept somebody else's point of view than expose myself to quarrel.
  - b. For a conflict resolution I opt for a neutral ground.
- 18.
  - a. I like to meet others half-way.
  - b. I like to cooperate with others and jointly look into their arguments.
- 19.
  - a. I think that the reasons of dissent are very often not worth enough to quarrel.
  - b. Usually I'm assertive in accomplishing my own goals.
- 20.
  - a. When the conflict starts I always try to pursue my own goal.
  - b. I avoid strong-minded people.
- 21.
  - a. I think that most of expressed thoughts, including mine, are not worth much as arguments.
  - b. Once developed I do not change my opinion.
- 22.
  - a. I'm collecting second hand opinions and submitting the problem to public discussions.
  - b. I think that the reasons of dissent are very often not worth enough to quarrel.
- 23.
  - a. I avoid strong-minded people.
  - b. I always play a square game and I encourage other person to do the same.
- 24.
  - a. I prefer to give up persuasion and indicate directly the best solution of the problem.
  - b. I think that most of expressed thoughts, including mine, are not worth much as arguments.
- 25.
  - a. I'm collecting second hand opinions and submitting the problem to public discussions.
  - b. In difficult situation I try to look for a compromise.
- 26.
  - a. I always play a square game and I encourage other person to do the same.
  - b. For a conflict resolution I opt for a neutral ground.
- 27.
  - a. I prefer to give up persuasion and indicate directly the best solution of the problem.
  - b. I like to meet others half-way.
- 28.
  - a. Sometimes I sacrifice my own goal to the benefit of other person.

- b. I'm collecting second hand opinions and submitting the problem to public discussions.
29. a. I always play a square game and I encourage other person to do the same.  
b. I prefer to accept somebody else's point of view than expose myself to quarrel.
30. a. I like to cooperate with others and jointly look into their arguments.  
b. I prefer to give up persuasion and indicate directly the best solution of the problem.

	a	b		a	b		a	b
	=====			=====			=====	
1.	D	E	11.	C	A	21.	A	D
2.	E	D	12.	A	C	22.	E	A
3.	D	E	13.	D	B	23.	A	E
4.	B	A	14.	B	D	24.	E	A
5.	B	A	15.	D	B	25.	E	C
6.	B	A	16.	C	B	26.	E	C
7.	C	D	17.	B	C	27.	E	C
8.	D	C	18.	C	B	28.	B	E
9.	C	D	19.	A	D	29.	E	B
10.	A	C	20.	D	A	30.	B	E

SCORE: A = ..... B = ..... C = ..... D = ..... E = .....

A = avoiding B = accommodating C = compromising D = competing E = collaborating

## 1. Interview questions with students

Subject: Conflict management and effectivity in multicultural teams

Researcher: Aino Ranta

Disclaimer: All results will be anonymous and only used for the research and thesis in question.

Concepts:

- Constructive conflict type: conflict based on tasks, dealt with constructively.
- Relationship conflict type: conflict based on personal emotions and preferences, hard to deal with constructively.
- Win – win style: collaborative conflict management, both parties' interests considered.

- Win – lose style: competitive conflict management, one party dominates solution.
- Zero-sum style: avoiding, compromising and forcing conflict management, conflict is left unsolved or both parties compromise something for solution.

1. Have you directly worked with your team members before?
2. Did the team spend time on getting to know each other personally or was work began directly?
3. Were the roles and responsibilities of members discussed and divided prior to working or did they fall into place naturally?
4. Did the clear roles help decrease conflict or make its solutions easier? Did established roles make work more efficient?
5. Did cultural diversities make teamwork more efficient?
6. What type of conflict was there?
7. Was conflict solved in a win – win style, win- lose style or a zero-sum style?
8. Did conflict affect effectivity of work or the results? How and how much?
9. Were you satisfied with the teamwork experience?
10. Did you get the expected results?
11. How much time was used on the project and was it used effectively?

## 2. Interview questions with employees

Subject: Conflict management and effectivity in multicultural teams

Researcher: Aino Ranta

Disclaimer: All results will be anonymous and only used for the research and thesis in question.

Concepts:

- Constructive conflict type: conflict based on tasks, dealt with constructively.
- Relationship conflict type: conflict based on personal emotions and preferences, hard to deal with constructively.
- Win – win style: collaborative conflict management, both parties' interests considered.



- Win – lose style: competitive conflict management, one party dominates solution.
- Zero-sum style: avoiding, compromising and forcing conflict management, conflict is left unsolved or both parties compromise something for solution.

1. What kind of MCT experience do you have?
2. Have you directly worked with your team members before? Were there any cultures you were not familiar with?
3. Did the team spend time on getting to know each other personally or was work began directly?
4. Were the roles and responsibilities of members discussed and divided prior to working or did they fall into place naturally?
5. What type of conflict was there? Constructive or relationship?
6. Did the clear roles help decrease conflict or make its solutions easier? Did established roles make work more efficient?
7. Did cultural diversities make teamwork more efficient?
8. Was conflict solved in a win – win style, win- lose style or a zero-sum style? If it was solved collaboratively, do you feel like it made work more satisfying, effective and results better? If not, do you feel like it created problems or inefficiency?
9. Did conflict affect effectivity of work or the results? How and how much?
10. Were you satisfied with the teamwork experience?
11. Did you get the expected results? Or what results are you expecting?
12. How much time was used on the project and was it used effectively?

